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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents the history of "Southern Magazine," the only widely circulated general interest magazine in the South, published from 1986-1989, after which, experiencing money problems, the magazine was bought out by a competitor and ceased publication. The seven chapters of the thesis are as follows: (1) Introduction; (2) Climate of Regional Magazine Publishing; (3) Genesis of "Southern Magazine"; (4) "Southern Magazine": Publishing History; (5) Sale and Repositioning; (6) Content Analysis; and (7) Summary and Conclusions. Four tables of data are included. A selected bibliography lists 78 newspaper and magazine articles, theses and unpublished works, interviews, and books. (SR)

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THE HISTORY OF SOUTHERN MAGAZINE, 1986-1989

BY

RONALD JONATHAN GRAHAM, JR.

B.A.E., University of Mississippi, 1986

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of
The University of Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Masters of Arts
in the Department of Journalism

The University of Mississippi

April, 1990

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ABSTRACT

THE HISTORY OF SOUTHERN MAGAZINE

GRAHAM, JR., RONALD JONATHAN. B.A.E., University of Mississippi, 1986. M.A., University of Mississippi, 1990. Thesis directed by Dr. Samir A. Husni.

Southern Magazine was published from 1986-1989. The magazine was the only widely circulated general interest magazine in the South. With its original concept, Southern Magazine experienced many unique situations and problems. After two-and-a-half years, Southern Magazine needed more money. The magazine was bought out by a competitior and killed. The competitor, Southern Progress Corporation, did not think the South could support a general interest magazine.

Through interviews with the magazine's staff and industry experts, suggestions for future Southern magazine ventures and their feasibility are provided.

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CHAPTER I

THE HISTORY OF SOUTHERN MAGAZINE

Introduction

In the past twenty years, there has been a trend away from the weekly general interest magazines like Life, The Saturday Evening Post, Look, and Collier's. They have been replaced with special interest and regional publications. Many are born and shortly die.

Southern Magazine attempted to combine elements of both genres: the general interest and the regional publication. It was an effort to encompass the complex and difficult and to define identity of the South in a general interest format.

The brainchild of Alan Leveritt, publisher, and Linton Weeks, editor, Southern Magazine was born of the belief that Southerners, constituting a major market, have a special identity they want to read about. One out of every three Americans live in the South. So it is the most populous region in the country and the leader in retail, automobile and truck sales. Thus Leveritt and Weeks thought they had a very viable market which would attract national advertisers and subscribers.

With a seven million dollar investment from Stephens, Inc., a major banking investment company in Little Rock, and an initial paid circulation of 210,00, Southern Magazine began publishing in the Fall of 1986.

Although Southern Magazine was able to attract national advertisers, especially car and liquor companies, over the next two years, the magazine began to experience problems in increasing circulation and maintaining consistent editorial content. By December 1989, Leveritt and Weeks sought an additional two million dollar investment in an attempt to alleviate these problems. The money was intended to be used for a direct mail campaign for new subscribers in the summer of 1989 and to increase the size of the editorial staff from nine to at least eleven.

The two men went back to Stephens, Inc. with their request and were told to find "publishing partners" to assist with financial and editorial matters. Before this could be accomplished, however, Stephens made an agreement with Southern Progress Corporation to take over the magazine, which they did on March 17, 1989. The Southern Magazine staff was not informed of the new partnership until the final deal was made. Southern Magazine's staff was permitted to complete Volume Three of the magazine: May/June, July/August and September issues. None of the editorial staff continued

after the magazine was moved from Little Rock, Arkansas, to Atlanta, Georgia, and repositioned as Southpoint.

Three years and 34 issues later, Southern Magazine was repositioned and renamed Southpoint, The Metropolitan Monthly. There was no acknowledgement of any past connection with Southern Magazine or its concept. Editorial offices were moved to Atlanta, and Southern Progress Corporation, with headquarters in Birmingham, became the principal stockholder. Alan Leveritt was bought out, and Stephens, Inc. became the secondary stockholder.

The life of many magazines is short. Only two out of every ten magazines survive more than four years.[1]

Why does a magazine which started out with such promise, targeting a major market such as the South with strong regionalism becomes a publishing casualty presents an interesting case study of the magazine publishing business. This study seeks to answer that question. It traces the genesis of Southern Magazine, its evolution and the problems which led to its eventual demise. To provide perspective and a point of comparison, this analysis also examines the experience with regional magazine publishing in general.

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[1]Samir Husni, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 29 November 1989.

Methodology

Computer searches were conducted on Books in Print Plus, Dissertation Abstracts, Educational Resources Information Center, and Info Trac. Additional computerized indexes and references were used at Athens State College, Athens, Alabama; University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee; Whittle Communications Library, Knoxville, Tennessee; Little Rock Public Library, Little Rock, Arkansas; and Jackson Public Library, Jackson, Mississippi.

Magazine Index and Newspaper Index on microfilm were also consulted. Bound indexes included Journalism Abstracts, Dissertation Abstracts, News Banks, and Journalism Quarterly. Standard Rate and Data Service's Consumer and Agri-Media Rate and Data was used to find editorial concept and general advertising policies, and Audit Bureau of Circulation material yielded circulation figures for Southern Magazine.

Personal interviews were conducted with Olivia Myers Farrell, associate publisher of Southern Magazine; Alan Leveritt, publisher of Southern Magazine; Don Logan, Chief Executive Officer of Southern Progress Corporation; Doug Martin, vice president of Stephens, Inc.; Beth Arnold Graves Morgan, assistant editor of Southern Magazine; James Morgan,

editorial director of Southern Magazine; Don Webster, assistant editor of Southern Magazine and Linton Weeks, editor of Southern Magazine. Each was asked similar general questions as well as personalized questions designed to explore specific areas of expertise.

Several other people were questioned about Southern Magazine, its reputation in the publishing industry and background information about regional magazines. Those included Jim Blazevitch, Midwest advertising manager of the Crosby Vandenburgh Group; Julie Lewitt-Nirenberg, publisher of Mirabella magazine and former publisher of New York Woman; and Richard Rosenthal, president of F & W Publications.

Content Analysis

A content analysis of the 34 issues of Southern Magazine was also done. "The Editor's Note," departments and features were reviewed to find any information relevant to the study. The number of pages in each issue was counted to determine the editorial to advertising ratio.

The content analysis chapter uses only feature articles from the table of contents to categorize the editorial content of Southern Magazine. This content is classified into ten topics or categories of stories: 1. Southern culture and folklore; 2. personality profile; 3. government, politics and law; 4. literature; 5. recreation, fashion and travel; 6. novelty and humor; 7. historical; 8. epicurean; 9. business and industry; and 10. trends and surveys. Based on the description and title, all one-hundred-and-forty-four features were placed in the categories. Multi-theme articles were placed in the category of overriding emphasis.

A sample of three tables of contents were selected randomly.[2] These three tables of contents: Volume 1 No. 7, Volume 1 No. 9, and Volume 2 No. 11 were combined and given

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[2]Walter R. Borg and Meredith D. Gall, Educational Research: An Introduction. (White Plains, NY: Longman, Inc., 1983), 905.

to two other coders: an M.A. candidate in journalism and a professional journalist with 18 years experience. The two coders were asked to analyze three selected tables of contents using the ten categories.

The correlation between the additional coders and the original coder was done based on the number of agreements. Seventeen feature statements were used, but two were disqualified as a result of a coder assigning multiple categories to the statements. One coder had eight correlations with the original coder. While the other had 12 correlations with the original coder.

Ole Holsti's formula to determine the reliability of the coding was used:

$$R = \frac{2\ (C1,2)}{C1 + C2}$$

C1,2 is the number of category assignments both coders agreed on, and C1 + C2 is the total of category assignments made by both coders.[3]

It was agreed that the outcome of this test of reliability should be higher than 85 percent in order to consider the table of categories sufficiently specific for

---

[3]North, Robert Content Analysis. (Chicago, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1963), 49.

the reliable coding of the content material. The results of the test of reliability showed that the percentage of agreement with the first coder was 53 and the second coder had an agreement percentage of 80.

After the first test, the categories were redefined with an explanation:

1. Southern culture and folklore--articles about the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of the South or traditional customs, tales, or sayings.

2. Personality profile--articles about an individual or individuals and their personal traits, attitudes and habits.

3. Government, politics and law--articles related to government, policy making, public administration and legal issues.

4. Literature--writings in prose or verse; stories and narrations.

5. Recreation, fashion and travel--articles about free time activity, lifestyle, clothing, trips, and tours.

6. Novelty and humor--something unusual or designed be comical and amusing.

7. Historical--articles about the past or record of significant events.

8. Epicurean--articles related to food or beverages.

9. Business and industry--articles about commercial, economic or manufacturing information.

10. Trends and surveys--articles about new developments, examination of conditions, situations or values, and questionnaires.

For the second test, two additional coders were selected. One was a journalism instructor with a M.A. in journalism, while the other was a candidate for a M.A. in journalism. The same 17 features from the three selected tables of contents were used. No features were disqualified. The list of categories included the brief description written after the first reliability test.

In the second reliability test one coder had 15 correlations with the original coder or 88 agreement percentage. The other coder had 16 correlations for a 94 agreement percentage. The outcome of the second test was a 91 percent correlation between the second group of coders and the original coder.

The purpose of the coding was to draw conclusions about Southern Magazine and its development based on editorial content.

Study Framework

This study is designed to answer several questions which provide the basis for analysis. What is the climate of regional magazine publishing in general, and is it favorable for this type of publication? What was the concept of Southern Magazine and how was it formulated and executed?

What role did the management's philosophy play in the problems that developed? What was the business plan, and did subscription figures and advertising income meet expectations?

What were the major problems in terms of establishing a strong editorial identity, finding good material and building the necessary circulation and advertising base?

This evaluation of the history of Southern Magazine and the climate of regional magazine publishing should provide a basis for some understanding of the difficulties in starting and sustaining a new magazine of this type. Examination of the evolution of this magazine and its problems should yield some insights into the problems and pitfalls which might be useful to others who would venture into this uncertain world of magazine publishing.

But Southern Magazine did not exist in a vacuum. It is part of a genre—the regional magazine—where others have been successful. As such, it shares some of the same negative and positive elements of this type of publication. So to put the experience of Southern Magazine into perspective, it is first necessary to examine the experience of regional magazine publishing.

CHAPTER II

CLIMATE OF REGIONAL MAGAZINE PUBLISHING

Most regional magazines in the South started after 1970. There were various reactions to these publishing ventures which took off during the decade of the seventies. A 1971 study analyzing the status of the Southern magazine industry, conducted by Linda Clopton, yielded some interesting findings which provide a framework for considering the experience of this type of publication. She found that American scholars had virtually ignored Southern publishing except for certain respected literary annals.

Individual income in the South has risen from a mean of $6,562 in 1970 to $8,595 in 1980.[1] This rising income in the South has meant increased regional advertising in magazines. And an increasingly mobile, cosmopolitan population became interested in local color and history.

The most frequent argument in support of regional magazines is this growing interest in regional identity and curiosity about the region. This is direct counterpoint to

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[1] 1980 Census of Population: General Social and Economic Characteristic. (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Commerce, December 1983), 51.

the stand that the South is becoming more cosmopolitan and less interested in itself as a special entity. According to Clopton's study the increased emphasis on regionalism came to the South as the technological advances made the world smaller.[2] Many publishers contend that as the world becomes "smaller" and people travel more extensively, their immediate surroundings are often more foreign to them than other countries. Television, technology, and the increased mobility of our society acquaint people with the new, the international, and all the other places and situations that were once distant and mysterious. As a result, people turn to local history and flavor to satisfy their sense of adventure. As society becomes more mobile and transitional, more people are shifted from city to city, state to state, each new community then becomes a new field to explore.[3]

An interest in the the "old" and history is also reflected in the circulation trends of magazines dealing with antiques, history , and archaeology.[4] This interest in history gives people the desire to learn more about their

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[2]Linda E. Clopton, "A Study of the Magazine Industry since 1945 in the Southern States East of the Mississippi" (M.A. diss., Indiana University, 1971), 59.

[3]Ibid., 61.

[4]Ibid., 58.

area and its history.

In order to get opinions from the magazine industry, Clopton interviewed Southeastern editors and publishers about the future success of regional titles. W.B. Wright, editor of The State, felt that people in the future will have an "increasing need" to maintain their regional identity as society becomes more urbanized and "emphasis centers more on the national scene."[5] Farmer Seale, editor of the ill-fated South Illustrated, felt that Southerners would want a magazine which would afford a "meeting place" where ideas, interests, aspirations are exchanged.[6] Something like a country store for the whole South.

Delta Review editor, Henry Mitchell, predicted two types of magazines that could be successful: an economic-business magazine with conservative, demagoguery appeal; or a "new South" magazine with an on-the-move image.[7] John Chadwick, former associate editor of South magazine, however, felt the

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[5]W.B. Wright quoted in Linda E. Clopton, "A Study of the Magazine Industry since 1945 in the Southern States East of the Mississippi" (M.A. diss., Indiana University, 1971), 74.

[6]Farmer Seale quoted in Linda E. Clopton, "A Study of the Magazine Industry since 1945 in the Southern States East of the Mississippi" (M.A. diss., Indiana University, 1971), 72.

[7]Henry Mitchell quoted in Linda E. Clopton, "A Study of the Magazine Industry since 1945 in the Southern States East of the Mississippi" (M.A. diss., Indiana University, 1971), 73.

South has become less regionalistic and therefore was less optimistic about the South supporting a regional publication.[8]

All four men were fairly accurate in their predictions for future Southern magazines. There was a shift toward a regional identity and regional magazines in the 1980s. Seale's magazine of the future South basically describes Southern Magazine. Mitchell's new South publication is similar to Southern Magazine, while the economic-business magazine described is like Southpoint. At the same time, Chadwick's opinion that the South would not support a regional publication is also true. Regional magazines are reaching a smaller percentage of their total region, but due to population increases are able to maintain a rate base. As the South has seen its population increase, magazine publishers, like Southern Living, are finding it difficult to maintain their circulation rate base.[9]

There has been some support for regional publications. Success has occurred when certain elements are present:

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[8]John Chadwick quoted in Linda E. Clopton, "A Study of the Magazine Industry since 1945 in the Southern States East of the Mississippi" (M.A. diss., Indiana University, 1971), 75.

[9]Don Logan, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 17 November 1989.

longevity, circulation, the potential for influencing attitudes and the magazine's leadership in the publishing industry and with its readers. But some of the success, as Clopton points out, also has to do with the ability of regional magazines to give a perspective on history:

> In modern history, no one opinion gives a true picture of a region. Neither the philosopher nor the demagogue truly represents his society. For those who seek the whole story, magazines have the properties for showing a people's character with greater depth and scope than most other means, since they are more public than letters or diaries yet can cover more subjects in depth than newspapers have time to do.[10]

While many magazines have been successful, they and those which fail have been plagued with similar problems which many share such as scare financial backing, low advertising volume, a lack of experienced and knowledgeable workers, inadequate printing facilities and poor printing quality. It's difficult to find initial capital, thus some magazines start with little cash. Then it takes an average of three years to make money.[11]

Regionals sometimes have an editorial content or focus

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[10]Linda E. Clopton. 1971. A Study of the Magazine Industry since 1945 in the Southern States East of the Mississippi, M.A. diss., Indiana University, 1.

[11]Samir Husni, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 29 November 1989.

that is too opinionated for the magazine to have a large circulation. A strongly opinionated editorial often scares away advertisers. Yet some magazines survive because readers and/or advertisers support the magazine's point of view.

But regional magazines often have too limited appeal for national advertisers and are also too far removed from national advertisers and advertising agencies. Magazine advertising is not common in the South; therefore, businesses and local advertisers lack skills and creativity in dealing with this medium and do not know the advantage of magazine advertising.

There also is the loss of regional identity. As the South becomes more cosmopolitan and less interested in the region, it loses its regional identity which directly affects these types of publications. With migration to the South of people from other parts of the country and the world, the South increases its diversity. Regionals, therefore, often duplicate content of national material to reach this diverse market although their market is more specialized.

Regional publishers have an advantage over the national magazines, in that they do target a specialized audience, practice advocacy journalism and capitalize on a growing regional interest. Advocacy journalism especially helps city magazines expose problems which may become partisan

battlegrounds. But such problems are limited to the local community and the magazine coverage often serves as catalyst for a cure. Most city magazines profess their intent to help their parent city to become the best place to live. Some city and regional titles wage campaigns in the interests of their readers and in effect become lobbyists for their subscribers.[12]

Lewis P. Simpson's article on periodicals in the Encyclopedia of Southern History says the sparseness of population, low literacy rate, and lack of cities and publishing centers are the physical reasons that no general interest Southern magazine has been successfully produced.[13]

By 1982, an Advertising Age article noted that the interest in regional publications was indeed growing and that the time is right for more regional titles using Sunset and Southern Living as examples. Sunset is a regional shelter publication for the Western states. Sunset was founded in 1928.

Sunset, The Magazine of Western Living is published

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[12]Linda E. Clopton. 1971. A Study of the Magazine Industry since 1945 in the Southern States East of the Mississippi, M.A. diss., Indiana University, 57.

[13]Encyclopedia of Southern History (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1979, "Periodicals," by Lewis Simpson.

> for the 13 Western states, including Hawaii. It is a "how-to-do-it" guide covering the areas of travel, food and entertaining; home and building; remodeling and maintenance; and gardening. Is published in four editorial zone editions so that contents may be localized within the Western region it serves.[14]

Southern Living has a similar editorial content. Both have strong circulation among the upscale and are full of national advertising. The key to Southern Living's success is the Southern market. As "the biggest and fastest growing market in the United States," the South contains 34 percent of the total United States population, yet national magazines are underdelivered in the South.[15] Southern Living is soft editorially but prides itself on accuracy. The magazine has four categories of editorial material: travel and recreation, garden and landscape, homes and building, and food and entertainment. Southern Living has virtually no free lance work. Its management tries to avoid controversy and negative aspects of the South.

> Southern Living is edited for, and concerns the tastes and interests of contemporary Southerners. The magazine regularly traces developments in the areas of travel and recreation, homes and building, gardening and landscaping, and food and entertaining.[16]

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[14]Standard Rate and Data Service, 26 November 1988, 320.

[15]"Good climate for regionals," Advertising Age, 5 April, 1982, 34.

[16]Standard Rate and Data Service, 26 November 1988, 319.

Another 1982 Advertising Age article proclaimed the glory of local magazines as a great place for upscale advertisers. Local magazines are more successful than ever as a result of heightened public interest in local concerns.[17] Government decentralization and inflation have contributed to localism. Decentralization of the United States government in the early 1980s developed into a major social trend.[18] Inflation also contributes to keeping people in one place, where they dig deeper roots. To tap into this local interest, magazines must adjust to significant shifts in reader interests and needs, such as schools, special editions, guides, and local history/architecture.[19]

As people began to focus on their community, regional magazines grew.[20] In 1970 there were 23 city and regional magazines; their number had increased to 147 by 1984. City magazines are important to people coming into the community and the newly upwardly mobile, but as financial and physical mobility decreases, circulation of city magazines will also

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[17]"The localism: Upscale readers scan the scene," Advertising Age, 5 April, 1982, 28.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]"Consumer and Regional Magazines: Growth dots the landscape, " Advertising Age, 17 January, 1985, 40.

decrease. Regional publications are now breaking down into special interest segments. Regional shelter magazines seem to be the most successful, yet there must be enough local flavor in the special interest to give publication a purpose.[21]

By 1985, Advertising Age said that being in the right place is not enough for regional magazine success.[22] History shows only one magazine can be a major force in each market.[23] Arkansas Times and other small local magazines are a labor of love and are doing well, but there is such a limited market that there can be no competition.[24] Arkansas Times is the flagship magazine of Arkansas Writers Project, publisher of Southern Magazine. The unique down-home approach of Arkansas Times was translated to Southern Magazine. Although this approach was successful with the 30,000 readers of Arkansas Times, Southern Magazine had to present itself more formally. The success of Arkansas Times is based on the close

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[21]"The localism: Upscale readers scan the scene," Advertising Age, 5 April, 1982, 28.

[22]"Being in right place not enough for success," Advertising Age 17 January, 1985, 40.

[23]Ibid.

[24]"Being in right place not enough for success," Advertising Age 17 January, 1985, 40.

relationship of the readers with the editorial content. Southern Magazine, although produced by the same company, could not transfer the reader-magazine relationship due to the larger size audience and selective interest of its audience.

Jonathan Schenker, in an 1986 Public Relations Journal article, said that regional titles are becoming more specialized.[25] Examples of regional magazines include: Indianapolis Monthly, San Francisco Focus, Metropolitan Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, Mid-Atlantic, New Mexico, and Nob Hill Gazette. Regional or city magazines may be the last general interest magazines in the country and even these increasingly relate to their readers' lifestyles.

In the top 50 U.S. markets, the number of local business magazines increased from 20 in 1979 to nearly 100 in 1986. General interest magazines are giving way to special-interest publications and publications that play up local color. The general editorial metropolitan, city and regional magazines are being created for a population segment like New York Woman, Outweek, New York Writer, and LA Style.

A 1985 survey of 30 magazines belonging to City and

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[25]"Regional magazines specialize," Schenker, Jonathan. Public Relations Journal, Spring 1986, 240.

Regional Magazine Association, conducted by Don Bowdren Associates, indicates that 15 percent of the readers are 65 and older; 54 percent are women; and 70 percent married. Average household income of readers is $76,000. As the average age of the city magazine reader rises, one of the challenges to magazines is how to attract younger readers.

City magazines started nearly 80 years ago out of the urban reform movements, then grew as public relations vehicles for local chambers of commerce. In 1948, Edwin Self launched San Diego Magazine, the first city magazine in the spirit of today's publications. Today the top 15 U.S. markets each have a magazine.

Chapter III

GENESIS OF SOUTHERN MAGAZINE

The Concept

The lack of a Southern general interest magazine was lamented seven years before Southern Magazine's first issue. Lewis P. Simpson, in the essay on periodicals in the South in Encyclopedia of Southern History, said that Southern periodicals have been either literary reviews or special interest publications:

> Notable by its absence is a [magazine of] general literary, intellectual, and societal character. The failure of the South to produce at least one such magazine suggests that the historical evolution of Southern periodicals was truncated.[1]

The racial issue in the South, Simpson suggests, had prevented production of a magazine of ideas. All attempts to produce a Southern magazine have been preceded by a "litmus test" to determine the title's stand on racial issues.[2] Often the stance on race overpowered all other editorial

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[1]Encyclopedia of Southern History (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1979, "Periodicals," by Lewis Simpson.

[2]Linton Weeks, "Editor's Note: A Reason for Being," Southern Magazine, April 1987, 8.

considerations. But by 1986, Southern Magazine was able to publish a Southern magazine with no real debate concerning race. Editor Linton Weeks said by 1986 courts had abolished institutional racism and equality has become law, so there is nothing racist about being Southern, only that human beings sometimes discriminate.[3]

In 1986, Southern Magazine's premiere October issue, "The South And Welcome To It" became the first general interest consumer magazine for the South with a wide circulation. The editorial concept stated, "Southern Magazine profiles the people, issues, history, politics, arts, and business of the Southern region."[4]

Southern Magazine had been an idea since 1977.[5] Alan Leveritt and Linton Weeks were drinking beer and playing pool at Little Rock's, now defunct, Peck's Bar when the idea was born.[6] At the time, Weeks was a feature writer for the Arkansas Democrat and Leveritt was publisher of Arkansas Times magazine. Refusing to let the dream die, the two waited

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[3]Ibid.

[4]Standard Rate & Data Service, 21 March 1986, 367.

[5]Atlanta Journal and Constitution, 8 June 1986, H-3.

[6]Linton Weeks, "Editor's Note: On Becoming Good Friends," Southern Magazine, October 1986, 8.

for six years to start the magazine. Their idea was to create a voice for the eleven states of the Old Confederacy plus Kentucky and West Virginia.[7]

The magazine was to be a distinctive voice, Southern by nature, which would make it a better critic of the South than those who were outside of the region.[8] Weeks wrote in the first issue:

> The South deserves a provocative, entertaining magazine that not only celebrates its quirky quintessence , but meets regional controversies head on, probes the paradoxes of what it means to be a Southerner today, and treats our homeland with a critical eye and a gentle hand.[9]

In preparation for the October 1986 launch, a direct mail campaign and prototype issue were created. The 6.7 million piece direct mail campaign went out during the Summer of 1986. The prototype issue was developed using a dummy editorial with real headlines and had fifty-seven pages in front, seventeen pages in the back with the twenty-five middle pages blank. The prototype was an invaluable selling

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[7]Atlanta Journal and Constitution, 8 June 1986, H-3.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Linton Weeks, "Editor's Note: On Becoming Good Friends," Southern Magazine, October 1986, 8.

tool for the new magazine.[10]

The prototype issue set the pace for the next thirty-four issues, the design and format remained consistent. The prototype issue carried a letter from Leveritt and Weeks explaining the concept:

> The magazine is about the South, the whole South, and nothing but the South. It's about heroes and barbecues and political scoundrels. It's about rattlesnake round-ups, sport fishing, textile mills, and micro-chip research. It's about fire in the coal mines, football fanatics, and one man's musings on mules. It's about storytelling, yacht racing, rising skylines, fox hunting, and mint juleps in Dixie cups. It's about debutantes and voodoo queens, deer camps and death on Parris Island. It's a magazine for today's thinking, reading, affluent Southerner.
>
> Southern Magazine will be looking for the South's new heroes, symbols, perspective and solutions.
>
> We'll show our readers where to go, what to see, what to read, who to watch. The Southerner lives in a fast changing world. In the past, there have been pressures to conform, to homogenize, to move out of the region to places where curiosity and free-thinking are appreciated. But in today's real South, these traits are appreciated and rewarded. Southern Magazine will encourage involvement in, and commitment to, the nation's most dynamic and populous region--the South.[11]

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[10]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

[11]Alan Leveritt and Linton Weeks, "Dear Advertiser," Southern Magazine, Prototype issue, 2.

Investors and Editorial Control Discussions

Southern Progress Corporation

To produce the type of magazine Leveritt and Weeks felt comfortable with, there had to be start-up money. After the 1977 plan for Southern Magazine had been put together. Weeks and Leveritt did not have funding to do a test mailing much less several million dollars to launch the magazine. The plan was put aside. Leveritt continued to work on making Arkansas Writers Project successful while Weeks moved to France, while his wife, an artist, finished her education and then to Georgia. Back in Little Rock, Leveritt hired Blant Hurt, a recent University of Arkansas graduate with a bachelor's degree in English. At work one day, Hurt found the Southern Magazine business plan in a desk. Hurt encouraged Arkansas Writers Project to pursue the idea once more. Hurt also encouraged attendance at the Stanford Summer Publishing course in 1984. This course helped revise and rework the plan for Southern Magazine. His family finally financed a $100,000 direct mail test in 1984. The response was successful and the search for investors began.

The Southern Magazine business plan was presented to several possible investors, including The Baltimore Sun

Publishing Company and Bell South in Atlanta, Georgia. Southern Progress Corporation of Birmingham, Alabama, was interested enough to send its three top executives, Emory Cunningham, Don Logan and Jim Nelson, in February 1984 to meet with Weeks and Leveritt in Little Rock. Southern Progress Corporation, was at the time publishers of Progressive Farmer, Southern Living and Creative Ideas For Living. By March 1989, Creative Ideas For Living was sold, Cooking Light was launched, and Southern Accents and Travel South were acquired.

Don Logan explained the reasons for the corporation's interest:

> Alan had come to us looking for funding for this Southern magazine idea that he had. In addition, two instructors in the Stanford University summer publishing course called and told me about Leveritt and Weeks' magazine idea. We were interested in their idea because we were interested in developing a male-oriented magazine at the time and we were looking at starting a magazine called Southerners or The Southerner.[12]

Logan said the meeting basically was an introduction to the concept of Southern Magazine. The biggest concern was about editorial content and who would control the content:

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[12]Don Logan, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 17 November 1989.

> Alan and Linton presented their vision of the magazine and what they wanted to do. They told us a little bit of what they had done with Arkansas Times. Linton gave me a couple of books he had written, basically just talking about their background. The biggest sticking point that we had revolved around editorial control. Emory Cunningham did most of the talking for us. Jim Nelson and I were there participating and had to work together to agree on anything but Emory Cunningham was taking the lead on most of the conversations on the subjects. Alan, I think, got the impression that we wanted to control everything and have a magazine like Southern Living. Alan was concerned that if he gave it up any editorial control there would be a vanilla magazine instead of something a little more spicy.[13]

Leveritt said the meeting went well. He and Weeks were willing to give Southern Progress Corporation eighty percent interest in Southern Magazine, but wanted to retain control of the content.[14] Leveritt was willing to give Southern Progress Corporation eighty percent interest in the business but insisted on editorial control. Leveritt was concerned that Southern Progress Corporation would guide Southern Magazine toward the same type of editorial content as Southern Living.

The two groups had different concepts of what Southern Magazine should be, Logan said that the idea presented to him in 1984 was more like Southpoint than Southern Magazine:

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[13]Ibid.

[14]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

> The vision that Leveritt talked about was not that different than the kind of magazine we are ultimately producing with Southpoint, except he viewed Southern Magazine as having more literary quality to it. He envisioned the magazine as a place where budding writers and poets could come and have their works published. Leveritt also wanted the magazine to cover the world of business, politics, education and issues and other kinds of things that interest Southerners. Well, we had no problem with most of the editorial. But we felt that Leveritt was trying to cross it between a magazine with a little bit of a hard edge to it, coupled with this old view of the South. By trying to rationalize why the South is the way it is, mixed with literature, the concept was sort of a cross between a glorified New Yorker and antebellum days in the South.[15]

Leveritt, on the other hand, saw Southern Progress Corporation's idea for the magazine as "sort of a men's club magazine about what to wear, what clubs to join, very soft gentile thing for men, and we did not want any part of that."[16]

The meeting continued on until early afternoon when the question of editorial control came up. Both groups had reservations about giving any editorial control to the other. Don Logan said the problem surfaced in an unusual manner:

> Leveritt was talking about his visions of the

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[15]Don Logan, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 17 November 1989.

[16]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

> magazine, when finally Emory Cunningham made a couple of references to some things in the Arkansas Times. These issues were not the real concern but were used to make a point. The issue at hand was Leveritt's vision of the magazine, not the content of Arkansas Times. We did not feel comfortable with Alan's vision of the magazine. We thought Leveritt was making some fundamental mistakes with his magazine concept and that his execution of that was going to be rather poor.
>
> We kept telling Leveritt and Weeks to tighten up the concept and business plan. Our problem was more with the focus of the magazine. But we did not want to sit down and tell Leveritt and Weeks exactly what should be in the magazine. With this being our first meeting, we wanted to work out a business deal and then work out problems with editorial content. Leveritt got a little gun shy about working out a partnership. He was very adamant about not giving up any editorial control but I think Leveritt was reacting for the wrong reasons. This topic of editorial control ended our meeting.
>
> There was no follow-up discussion because of a situation developing concerning Southern Progress Corporation. On the plane trip back to Birmingham from Little Rock, for the first time we discussed the possibility of selling Southern Progress Corporation. Due to some recent investments, we felt the time was right to consider selling the company. We did not try to go back and solve any problems because there was a bigger fish on the line and we really could not talk about it. So Leveritt went his own way.[17]

Leveritt's account of the meeting and the point when the editorial control question was brought up explains the situation more clearly:

> We kept dancing around on who was going to control editorial content and finally Emory, to his credit brought it to a head, and he leaned over the table and said, 'Alan, you offended me the other night.' I had

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[17]Don Logan, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 17 November 1989.

not seen Emory for months and asked him what he meant and he said, 'I was reading your magazine, Arkansas Times, out loud to my daughter and you embarrassed me.' We had recently carried a humorous feature about rural Arkansas colloquial sayings like; 'if a frog had wings he would not bump his butt.' Emory was reading these sayings out loud to his daughter and read one that was a quintessential Arkansas colloquial saying; 'When we were little, we were so poor. For Christmas, momma would give us overalls with the pockets cut out, so we would have something to play with.'

After Emory said he was embarrassed about the article, he said, 'If that is the kind of stuff that is going to be in Southern Magazine, then we have nothing left to talk about!' After saying this, he stood up and was ready to leave.

Emory's statement was right out of the blue. Linton and I did not know what to say in response to him. Emory was very shrewd about bringing the question of editorial control to a head. We had no intentions of giving up our editorial control to Southern Progress Corporation. Linton and I had not thought about the possibility of sharing editorial control with Southern Progress Corporation. Their idea was not what we were really thinking about for Southern Magazine. We knew the point was that if we said, 'Well, okay Emory, we won't do that story ever,' Southern Progress Corporation would have control of the magazine. Conceding to Emory would have decided who was going to run editorial for Southern Magazine. We felt like there was no point in doing the magazine Emory's way and so they walked. I drove them back to the airport.[18]

The problems that surfaced at this meeting kept the companies from communicating for four years.

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[18]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

Stephens, Inc.

Behind the scene was Little Rock investment banking company, Stephens, Inc., the largest investment banker in the United States without headquarters on New York City's Wall Street.[19] Stephens, Inc. was founded in 1933 by brothers Witt and Jackson Stephens.[20] Since its founding, Stephens, Inc. has been involved in a variety of investment from oil futures to initial stock offerings.

Leveritt's initial contact with Stephens, Inc. came from being introduced to Witt Stephens, through a journalist. Witt Stephens then introduced Leveritt to Doug Martin, Stephens, Inc. vice president. Martin helped Leveritt acquire the start up money for Arkansas Business magazine in 1982. The investment of $100,000 was raised through Stephens, Inc. employees, not the company.[21] But this business venture gave Stephens, Inc. knowledge of Arkansas Writers Project and their work. The success of Arkansas Business

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[19]Christian Science Monitor, 6 November 1986, 8.

[20]William P. Barrett, "A Power Lunch at the Blue Plate Special?," Forbes, 18 May 1987, 104.

[21]Doug Martin, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

gave Leveritt the opportunity to ask Martin to help determine available funding for Southern Magazine. Martin inquired about investors and investment opportunities with publications. Eventually, Leveritt presented a funding proposal to Stephens, Inc.[22]

Stephens, Inc. helped fund a February 1985 direct mail test to 180,000 homes in the Southeast. The test had a four percent response rate which for direct mail response is excellent.[23] After seeing how successful the first test mailing was, Stephens, Inc. was willing to make an investment by November 1985.

Stephens, Inc. agreed to invest in Southern Magazine based on the test response rate and three other reasons. Vice president Doug Martin explains:

> We did it in part for the concept itself, secondly there are some tax benefits associated with magazine publishing, and thirdly Alan pledged collateral of his existing businesses, Arkansas Times and Arkansas Business, to Stephens, Inc. Even though the collateral of Arkansas Writers Project was not enough to cover the cost of the investment, we agreed to funding Southern Magazine.[24]

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[22]Ibid.

[23]Samir Husni, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 29 November 1989.

[24]Doug Martin, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock,

After the success of the test mailing, Stephens, Inc. agreed to secure funding for the magazine. The original request from Leveritt was 6.2 to 6.5 million dollars but Stephens, Inc. went ahead and committed seven million dollars.[25] Stephens, Inc. did not put up the entire investment commitment of seven million dollars but helped find other investors to form the Southern Limited Partnership. Stephens, Inc. was the principal investor, Arkansas Writers Project held five percent interest and the rest was spread among private investors.

Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

[25]Ibid.

Founders Publishing Experience: Arkansas Times

Both Alan Leveritt and Linton Weeks were involved in magazine publishing before they decided to found Southern Magazine. Leveritt started the Arkansas Writers Project in 1974 between nightly shifts as a cab driver, and Arkansas Times became the flagship publication. Weeks was hired as associate editor of Arkansas Times in 1984, after newspaper and literary experience.

Arkansas Times started very modestly and grew into a successful magazine. A two-hundred dollar loan was used to cover costs of inexpensive newsprint stock and printing of the first issue. The money came from a book store owner whose stated goal for helping produce Arkansas Times was "to make Little Rock the cultural center of the United States," said Leveritt.[26] The editorial concept of Arkansas Times is similar to other regional publications:

> Arkansas Times profiles the business, political and social culture of Arkansas. Arkansas Times devotes much of its space to investigative reporting, recreation and entertainment guides to Arkansas and penetrating analysis of Arkansas customs, politics, people and

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[26]Times Picaynue (New Orleans), 28 September 1986, G-6.

lifestyles.[27]

The magazine had a difficult time becoming financially successful. The staff did not receive paychecks for the first two and a half years, but were paid in stock.28 Bill Terry, editor emeritus of Arkansas Times, contributes the "big break" of the magazine on a writer's conference in 1976 which they sponsored.

> The big break came with the Writer's Conference of 1976, to which the Times, as sponsor, charged admission and from which the magazine earned a clear profit of just over $1,400. It was the first real money we had ever had. It was fast and easy, since we did not pay anything to the invited writers who held seminars, nor rent to the old Seafarer Restaurant, where the event continued for three days. But we gained something more valuable than money: the allegiance of well-known writers....
>
> In the years that followed, these people wrote and campaigned for us as contributing editors. They brought us prestige and quality, and the first thing you knew, the Times had a following and soon a verifiable circulation. I do not remember what it was exactly; it was around ten thousand, but we were on our way. Other writers were sending material now, and the magazine expanded to seventy-two, eighty, and even one hundred pages.29

With Arkansas Times' February 1977 issue, the cover was

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[27]Standard Rate & Data Service, 11 August 1986, 329.

[28]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

[29]Bill Terry, "Making It Up as We Went Along: The Smell of Possum," Arkansas Times, September, 1989, 17.

produced on glossy stock paper but the inside pages were still newsprint.[30] In September 1978, its fourth anniversary, the magazine went from newsprint to the magazine's present four-color glossy format. The move brought an increase in ad sales from $6,000 to $13,000 in one month.[31]

By 1986, Arkansas Times had a circulation of 32,000. The company is worth an estimated three million dollars today. Arkansas Times is now a slick magazine, laden with advertising, and the foundation of Arkansas Writers Project efforts which now include a biweekly state business magazine, Arkansas Business, a magazine for senior citizens, Active Age, and Today magazine, an entertainment guide for Little Rock.[32]

So when Leveritt started Southern Magazine in 1986, he had considerable magazine publishing experience. He also was a salesman who knew how to attract advertisers. The magazine saw growth in circulation and advertising and yet within two years had some problems.

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[30]Ibid.

[31]Mary McCabe English, "Little Guys' are optimistic: Most City and Regional Magazines maintain Low Profiles—and Big Ambition," Advertising Age, 30 March 1981, S-4.

[32]Times Picaynue (New Orleans), 28 September 1986, G-6 and Atlanta Journal and Constitution, 8 June 1986, H-3.

The problems of Southern Magazine came from both publishing and editorial. Publishing problems included the need for increased circulation and maintenance of rate base. The continually trouble with free-lancers was time consuming and slowed the staff down.

An easy solution to Southern Magazine's problems seemed to be asking Stephens, Inc. for an additional two million dollars. This created a bigger problem that resulted in the dissolution of the magazine.

Chapter IV

SOUTHERN MAGAZINE: PUBLISHING HISTORY

Promotion: Seeking Advertising

The first issue of Southern Magazine was launched in October 1986 with a 200,000 subscriber base and several promotional articles in Southern papers, including the Louisiana Times-Picaynue and Atlanta Journal and Constitution. It had forty-one pages of advertising in a one-hundred-and-fourteen page publication.

The first cover story, "The South and Welcome to It," set the tone for the magazine.

Southern Magazine's highly successful first issue had thirty-six percent advertising. In order to sustain initial advertisers, its rate base was guaranteed for one year. Publisher Alan Leveritt said:

> To keep advertisers they were given rate protection for a year and 20 percent off all those ads if the advertiser came in with a contract for three, six or twelve times and had an ad in the first issue. Only retailers do a lot of placement in November and December. Since our ads were largely automotive and liquor, we did not do so good in attracting advertisers with the next two issues. But when the spring started we

came in real strong, we carried 40 pages in March 1987.[1]

Leveritt was aggressive in his search for advertisers, he spent a great deal of time traveling and talking to potential advertisers.

> I felt like it was essential that I spend time contacting potential advertisers. Once Folio magazine said whoever is the spirit behind a publication must first totally detach themselves from the editorial. Because you will be the person most able to transmit to the business community the dream and concept of the magazine. As a founder and being reasonably articulate talking with advertisers and buyers I needed to be out in the field. I felt like we had good editors and circulation people. Where I needed to be was outside of the South and explain to people the South and how this magazine fit into its market. I think that eighty percent of my time was spent out on the road with my sales representatives making calls. Being on the road was invaluable in New York, Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles. I hardly ever went to Atlanta because Harold Chambliss who was our Southeastern regional advertising manager was excellent. He did not need me. He could explain the South just fine to Southerners. In New York, where you are dealing with a group of thirty year old New York women, who have never been outside of the city, you better get up there to explain the South.[2]

Leveritt also used various promotional schemes:

> For promotion, we would do rib lunches. We would fly up barbecue ribs from Little Rock's Semmes Barbecue and lay it out on a conference table covered with a big country tablecloth. Hank Williams tapes would play in the background. It was a very effective way to get people to let their guards down a little so they would look at you as human beings, which is always a challenge

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[1]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

[2]Ibid.

if you are selling nationally.[3]

Southern Magazine's staff showed their creativity with three-dimensional direct mail to advertisers and advertising agencies. Three-dimensional solicitations with unique Southern Magazine twists were positive steps in establishing an identity with advertisers. For example, the first dimensional direct mail, a copy of Harper Lee's To Kill A Mockingbird was mailed to about 2,000 potential advertisers and agencies around. Leveritt says:

> We pointed out the book's protagonist, Atticus Finch, to us, was the personification of the best side of the South and what the South could be. We wanted Southern Magazine to embrace the spirit of Atticus Finch. It was like the doors just opened with that mailing.[4]

It was Leveritt's theory that people are idealistic:

> Many media buyers are starved for a sense of idealism in what they see published in this country. When you would go to an office and the Soap Opera Digest man or Penthouse man was just there and you walk in with something like Southern Magazine, these people get interested. Probably no one goes to college to be a media director, they majored in something else. And when you come in with something like Southern Magazine it's like they want to adopt it.[5]

Leveritt conveyed his love and vision for the magazine to

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[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

advertisers who wanted to be part of his dream.[6] The techniques worked, and the first issue had five pages of advertising from Detroit, and Toyota began an advertising schedule in the second issue. "We just had a terrific response from advertisers," Leveritt said.[7]

More novelty, than idealistic, the remaining three-dimensional mailings emphasize some unique aspect of the South and Southern Magazine. Kudzu seeds, bells, bow ties, Royal Crown cola and Moon Pies were all sent to advertisers on behalf of Southern Magazine. The kudzu seeds were sent with a note saying, "We Cover the South." This campaign compared the rapid growth rate of Southern Magazine with that of a kudzu vine.[8] Small bells, along with small Southern style bow ties were attached to a card for representation of Southern Magazine's dual male and female audience.[9]

The last three-dimensional advertising mailings Southern Magazine did involved eating. Boxes were mailed to potential

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[6]Olivia Myers Farrell, interview by author, Notes, Little Rock, Arkansas, 9 April 1990.

[7]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

[8]Linton Weeks, "Editor's Note: For Art's Sake," Southern Magazine, June 1988, 8.

[9]Ibid.

advertising sources, labeled, "After we have wined and dined you, we want to discuss your corporate advertising. The box contained a Moon Pie and Royal Crown cola.[10]

By 1989, Southern Magazine's advertising efforts were paying off. The January 1989 issue lost money but February had forty pages of advertising and a $50,000 profit. The last issue in March 1989 carried sixty pages of ads and turned a $200,000 profit. Leveritt said that "our last quarter was our first profitable quarter."[11] But while advertising was picking up, other problems were building that hurt the magazine.

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[10]Ibid.

[11]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989

Circulation and Readership Problems

The first major problem was a financial setback resulting from trying to grow too fast too soon. Leveritt explains what happened after their second direct mail campaign in 1986:

> We did six million pieces of direct mail for our launch and netted 200,00 subscribers. Then six months later, actually five, we dropped another two million pieces of direct mail to get 50,000 subscribers. We wanted to grow fast and show our growth to the advertisers. But our second direct mail campaign was a disaster. What had happened is we went back to the same lists used in our first mailing and since it had been so extensive there were no real returns. The response rate was closer to zero percent than one percent. There are only twenty eight million households in the South and we went to six million of them. We should have waited a year to do our second direct mail campaign. Instead, we got our teeth knocked out and that was a thing we never were able to recover from, we were always financially behind after that. This set us back to where we stayed out of direct mail in July 1987. We returned in December 1988, and did fine but at that point we slowed our growth. We were too aggressive with trying to grow.[12]

Studies showed, according to Southern Magazine's market story, that national magazines like Fortune, Forbes, Business Week, Esquire, The New Yorker, Atlantic Monthly, and Vanity Fair were missing their marketing targets in the South.

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[12]Ibid.

Although "the South is the largest region in the country. It's a fact that most national magazines' circulations are disproportionately smaller in the South than in other regions."[13] Southern Magazine research offered national advertisers another option. They tried to guarantee a Southern market and provide an alternative to other Southern publications.

There was a great deal of effort by Southern Magazine to convince advertisers that they were a better choice than Southern Living. They were delivering a male target while Southern Living was delivering females.[14] Logan says they tried to position Southern Magazine against Southern Living because it gave Southern Magazine some credibility and a point of comparison.[15]

A market study, developed by Southern Magazine, reveals a Southern Magazine versus Southern Living readership study. Southern Magazine came out ahead when placed in head to head competition with Southern Living. Southern Magazine's readership outranked Southern Living's in community

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[13]John Cargile, "Gone with the Wind," Successful Magazine Publishing, July/August 1989, 20.

[14]Don Logan, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 17 November 1989.

[15]Ibid.

involvement categories. The demographics pointed out a dual audience—approximately 50 percent male and 50 percent female. Median age was computed at 42 to 45. Median household income ranged from $38,700 to $46,000, and the cost per thousand was very low across the board. The bottom line, the demographics showed, was that Southern Magazine's readers were upwardly mobile, well educated and had a substantial household income.

This was a sensitive area for Southern Progress Corporation folks, Leveritt said, "who could not reach a dual audience with the coffee table magazines it produced."[16]

Logan easily dismissed the Southern Magazine survey:

> The way people do surveys is to put down the points they are trying to make for their audience. Then construct the survey questions properly. After that you try to pick those subjects that will answer to your favor. Looking at the entire Southern Magazine, what they did was to pick out the things that cast your magazine in a favorable light and ignore the others. Then they built a presentation around it, rather than analytically stating their findings.[17]

Leveritt, as publisher, was interested in getting a sizable circulation from the beginning.[18] Advertisers are

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[16]John Cargile, "Gone With The Wind," Successful Magazine Publishing, July/August 1989, 20-21.

[17]Don Logan, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 17 November 1989.

[18]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

more willing to place and pay for ads in a magazine with good circulation. Weeks felt that circulation would grow naturally with the readership. In order to achieve a viable circulation, a lot of the start up money from Stephens, Inc. was spent on a 6.5 million piece mailing to households throughout the South.[19] It ended up costing more than was estimated too much to get the initial subscriber base, which Doug Martin said, "was about where we expected it would be." The mailing, however, "was a big use of funds. They used a lot more money than originally anticipated for circulation."[20] And that hurt the magazine and disturbed the investors.

Bankers felt there were problems with trying to get so many readers so fast. Doug Martin said that after the success of the first direct mail piece there was too much money and effort to attract the additional 50,000 readers.[21] One of the contributing factors affecting additional investors was too much money being spent on circulation. Martin points out that there was concern over conversions and renewals:

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[19]Doug Martin, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid.

> We started coming up with renewal and conversion rates that were running about five percentage points below what we had projected. While that might not sound considerable, that is a lot of money in subscriber and advertising revenues. We tried a number of adjustments but never could get those numbers up. Even though the ad sales were doing well, losing percentage points in conversions and renewals were bringing us down financially.[22]

Farrell said the problem was more complicated:

> Our renewals and conversion rate of 30% was okay by industry standards but in our business plan we based projections on Arkansas Times, which by that time was twelve years old and successful. Our biggest crime was we did not know enough to project reasonably.
>
> Stephens, Inc. was impatient. If we had been working with magazine venture capital, things would have been different. Our projections on renewals and growth were way too ambitious. Money wasn't the problem. The investors just lost faith in Southern Magazine. While at the same time, Southern Progress Corporation felt so threaten by Southern Magazine to the point that they couldn't let us exist.
>
> While we were getting ready to launch Southern Magazine, Southern Progress Corporation was testing a similar product. Southern Progress failed miserably. But after several presentations Southern Progress finally bluffed Stephens, Inc. into either joining with them or letting Southern Progress destroy Southern Magazine. It was asking a lot from Stephens, Inc. not to sell out, since they had no publishing experience.
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> Also Stephens, Inc. was an investor in Leisure Arts, a handicraft publishing company. Their magazine had a low overhead and a high circulation. This business venture increased Stephens, Inc.'s lack of confidence in Southern Magazine.[23]

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[22]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

According to Martin, Stephens, Inc. was concerned about the magazine's management of money, and thought too much was spent on circulation.[24] He thinks that the quest for circulation also caused problems between Leveritt and Weeks. As a salesman, Leveritt thought he had to show advertisers a circulation gain, but Martin thinks Weeks "would have preferred to let the circulation grow naturally, with the readership, trying to increase the circulation by 50,000 a year was too expensive."[25]

There were other problems, however, not only with writers but the magazine's concept, editorial philosophy and overall execution.

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[23]Olivia Myers Farrell, interview by author, Notes, Little Rock, Arkansas, 9 April 1990.

[24]Doug Martin, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

[25]Ibid.

EDITORIAL PHILOSOPHY PROBLEMS

Concept

During the formulation of Southern Magazine's editorial concept, there was discussion about what aspects of the South would be covered and their degree of coverage. Most of the discussions centered around historical versus contemporary topics. James Morgan objected to focusing the magazine in history. During the development period there were cover ideas about Helen Keller and Edgar Allen Poe, but he convinced the staff to be more current.[26] Morgan wanted to strike a balance between history and a contemporary timely magazine. Morgan thought about the focus before joining the staff in Little Rock:

> To the advertisers, I would say that Southern is the Texas Monthly of the South. Of course, most of them will think that Texas is Southern, and they'll wonder why anyone needs a separate magazine....
>
> To the readers, I'd say that Southern is a national-quality general-interest magazine that probes the meaning of "being Southern" today. My personal emphasis is on today, because I believe people turn to a monthly magazine to get a sense of where life is going. Wherever it's going, they're going with it, like it or not, and it's a magazine's job to interpret and forecast

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[26]James Morgan to Southern Magazine, 6 February 1986, Memo.

those currents of change in its readers' world.[27]

Southern Magazine's concept did not materialize with production instead always plagued the staff. Don Webster said it was always a source of discussions:

> We had the same problems from conception to development through the last issue. Everybody has their own version of the South; it's very personal. In Beaufort and Beaumont the South is a very different place and it is difficult to find something to bind them together.[28]

Associate publisher, Olivia Myers Farrell, agrees the main problem Southern Magazine had to deal with was not having "a clear idea of what the editorial product should be. Our editorial mission kept changing."[29]

The internal problem of editorial content was also affected by the readers. The staff had to be cautious of strong reader opinions of what the magazine should be. The premiere issue purposefully was a typographical cover. The typographical cover, "The South and Welcome to It", was done in part to avoid offending readers.

It seemed that most typical Southern symbols were loaded

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[27]Ibid.

[28]Don Webster, interview with the author, Tape recording, Knoxville, Tennessee, 22 August 1989.

[29]Olivia Myers Farrell, interview by author, Notes, Little Rock, Arkansas, 9 April 1990.

with double meanings or points of contention for Southerners. So while the staff debated the content, they always had to consider readers who were sensitive to Southern issues.

Eight months later, the topic was a satirical cover story for June 1987, "Isn't it time for a new flag? (And other symbolic questions.)," appeared. This story explored the loaded symbols of the South including Confederate statues, watermelons, magnolias, and the song, "Dixie."[30] The feature mildly criticized Southern institutions through humor. A strong reader reaction followed with 1000 subscription cancellations.[31]

Morgan had no problem with the controversy. He believed a magazine should provoke its readers occasionally, "but you don't go in someone's home every month and make them mad."[32]

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[30]M.S. Bell and others, "Loaded Symbols," Southern Magazine, June, 1987, 39-49.

[31]Alan Leveritt, interview with author, Notes, Little Rock, Arkansas, 9 April 1990.

[32]James Morgan, interview with the author, notes, Little Rock, Arkansas, 8 April 1990.

Covers

After the June 1987 cover featuring the confederate flag, Southern Magazine began to move away from strong provocative covers.[33] In a memo to Linton Weeks, Jeff Stanton, and Alan Leveritt, Morgan addresses the cover situation:

> Covers are more than billboards for a particular story on the inside; they're an important indication of the personality of the magazine itself. Our covers tell how we see the world; they reveal whether or not we're having fun, and whether or not we might be fun to hang around with. Consequently, our covers need to project a consistent personality, one that is unpredictable, provocative, smart, quirky, off-beat, amused and amusing. We want to keep our readers a bit off-balance; we want to educate them, be they subscribers or newsstand buyers, to wonder just what we'll do next![34]

But after June 1987, covers were non-controversial and soft editorially. By the Fall of 1988, the staff agreed to use more editorially stimulated covers, starting in mid-1989.

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[33]Ibid.

[34]James Morgan to Southern Magazine, 12 May 1987, Memo.

Free-Lance Problems

Leveritt said that editorial content problems were a result of relying on free-lance writers:

> There was a mistake made early in the start up of Southern Magazine. The question came up whether the magazine would be free-lance dominated with a group of editors or have editors and staff writers. We went with the freelancing because we felt like we needed them to produce the kind of magazine we wanted. We were concerned about the vast geography Southern Magazine would cover and we felt like free-lancers were necessary to properly cover the area.
>
> There were problems with free-lancers. For example,there was a piece on a national political figure from the South, we assigned the story to a Pulitzer Prize-winning Tennessee political writer. This was our cover story. When the story came in it was obviously written over the weekend. The writer had figured out a way to make two thousand dollars basically just by writing from his background knowledge. It was a very disappointing piece. So the problem was we found ourselves relying on free-lancers for the main stories. These stories were supposed to be great definitive pieces of journalism. It did not seem to matter how much money we were paying, we could not consistently get the hard journalism that we needed.[35]

Leveritt blamed free-lancers on the editorial inconsistencies of Southern Magazine, but Logan, of Southern Progress Corporation, did not feel that was a legitimate problem. Logan said,

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[35]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

> What Southern Magazine said about the problems of free-lance writing to staff writing, is that you have more control over staff written material. The flip side is, you usually have more talent and diversity with free-lancers. Magazines cannot afford to have the very top experts in certain fields on staff.
>
> I do not think that using free-lancers was their problem. Southern Magazine did not pay a lot to free-lancers, around two thousand dollars, but there was something else.
>
> The problem was not the free-lancers, but just the fact the Southern Magazine staff did not spend enough time working on the stories. They did not spend enough time getting the kind of stories that they needed. This problem is solved by a vision at the magazine of what you want and what you want to communicate to somebody, instead of how much you pay them or whether they work for you or not.[36]

Another source knowledgeable of Southern Magazine is Dr. Samir A. Husni, a University of Mississippi journalism professor. Husni, quoted in articles from the launch to the "Editor's Note" in the last issue, said the magazine had problems:

> The editorial consistency was not there, evident by the rapid change from issue to issue in terms of content.The content did not echo the prototype issue and what the first issue promised to deliver was never delivered. They seemed to have listened to critics, and then doing what every critic was telling them to do. The free-lance situation should not have been a problem, that's what editors are for, most new magazines use free-lancers and are able to adapt the submitted

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[36]Ibid.

material for publication.[37]

Don Logan also thinks that Southern Magazine had serious problems with editorial inconsistencies as well as the philosophy behind the magazine:

> When you bought Southern Magazine, you never knew what to expect inside. It might be something you were interested in and wanted to read or it might not find a single subject there that appealed to you. In my opinion, magazines have to have anchors in them. There has to be some reason for coming to that magazine. Whether it is Southern Living and if you come to the magazine for gardening. You may hate everything else but it may be worth the price for the gardening information there. But Southern Magazine did not have any anchors going for it.[38]

James Morgan refutes Logan's view of Southern Magazine not having any anchors. "Southern Magazine did not have the franchise anchors like Southern Living because it was a general interest magazine," said Morgan, "The anchor was the South and our readers liked this."[39]

After hearing that Southern Progress Corporation was trying to sue Southern Magazine for name infringement, Morgan wanted to make sure the magazine was distinct from Southern

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[37]Samir Husni, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 29 November 1989

[38]Don Logan, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 17 November 1989.

[39]James Morgan, interview with the author, notes, Little Rock, Arkansas, 8 April 1990.

Living:

> I'd like to think that the personality-- the attitude of our magazine is going to be so distinctive that it'll make people who even love Southern Living realize that it's a pretty tired magazine. We should jab at them whenever possible.... Southern Magazine: "Not just your garden variety Southern magazine," and Southern Magazine: "Because there's more to the South than cooking squash."[40]

Logan also criticized the Southern emphasis of the magazine. Part of the difficulty, in Logan's view, was the apparent notion that readers had to be told that what they were reading was Southern. There was too much explaining:

> They seem to have some mystic notion that the role with most of their stories was to explain why Southerners are Southern. They seemed to just want to beat that to death. Everything they wrote would go back and put some sort of perspective history on it; like we are not educated, we had the war, we call people Bubba. I mean they had to go back, and instead of writing about things Southerners are interested in, they would tell readers-- that it is Southern. Readers either know what is Southern or they do not. Southern Magazine had this passion about explaining what is Southern that made the magazine a turn-off. Southern Magazine thought that was one of its best features.[41]

Morgan will admit that during the first year Southern Magazine was too self consciously Southern. "We were poking our readers in the ribs saying, 'This is why we are all

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[40]James Morgan to Southern Magazine, 1 March 1986, Memo.

[41]Don Logan, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 17 November 1989.

Southern.'"[42] Both Leveritt and Morgan believe that the Southern emphasis had to be in the magazine. "If you detach the South from tradition, you don't have anything to talk about. At the same time, Southern Magazine had a contemporary flavor," said Leveritt.[43]

As serious as the editorial problems were, Logan thinks the difficulties had to do with the execution of the magazine:

> I could never get them to admit there was any editorial problem. They thought the problem was having to spend money on free lancers. If you are writing about the right subjects, even if you do it poorly, the magazine is going to do better than if you write about the wrong subjects well. It sounds real simple but the execution is quite different, it means if Southern Magazine had chosen the right subjects to write about, even if they had been using free-lance writers or dogs or whatever, the magazine was not nearly as good as they thought it could be. But if they were writing about the right things, Southern Magazine's overall renewal rate and payment on their business would have been a lot better.[44]

According to Logan, the staff did not seem to be able to produce a magazine that could appeal to people no matter what

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[42]James Morgan, interview with the author, notes, Little Rock, Arkansas, 8 April 1990.

[43]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 9 April 1990.

[44]Don Logan, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 17 November 1989.

state in the South they lived in, he said:

> The fundamental problem would not be fixed with what they had. That is always the question we have when trying to take a regional magazine and cut it across lines. What is it here in Mississippi that people would be interested in and would people in Alabama, Virginia or Texas be interested in the same thing. Can a magazine define enough of those connective elements to make the magazine interesting? If so, there could be cohesive magazine with departments and pictures that appeals to a wide section of the region's people. It is riskier to do a general appeal magazine like Southpoint or Southern Magazine than a highly specialized title like Southern Accents magazine..
> When Southern Progress Corporation started Southpoint, we knew the pitfalls of producing such a magazine. But if we chose our subjects right and execute them well then we can write stories and produce a magazine that is going to cut across those state boundaries.[45]

But the bottom line, as Logan sees it, was a problem with the management of the magazine and an inability to learn from mistakes:

> The management of the magazine was a problem, even in trying to learn from what they were doing. Instead of going back and assessing what was working and what was not, they just continued publishing. At Southern Progress Corporation, we learn from working and plan where to go from there. We know we make mistakes. We learn how are we going to improve from our mistakes. And, the answer to most of those questions of how to improve from mistakes, to Southern Magazine was that they did not know. They were no further along in circulation then they were the day they started on. They learned a few things that did not work but they did

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[45]Ibid.

not know what did.[46]

Leveritt thought more money to convert to a staff written magazine was the answer.[47] But investors apparently did not think so. He even had a list of Southern writers, the majority of them working at national magazines outside of the South, who were interested in returning to the South.[48] He asked for around two million dollars to substantially increase the editorial budget.[49] One year after the sale of the magazine, Leveritt was still convinced the solution was to increase Southern Magazine's editorial budget:

> I still think our solution was to get more control over the magazine. It is function of editors to work on freelanced material but also is a function of money. If you pay $1000 a story and Esquire spends $7000, the writer will spend more time on the Esquire story. We needed to put more money in freelance or staff. Either way we needed more money.[50]

Instead of trying to solve the problems of Southern Magazine with an infusion of money, Stephens, Inc. sold the

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[46]Ibid.

[47]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Notes, Little Rock, Arkansas, 9 April 1990.

magazine.

CHAPTER V

SALE AND REPOSITIONING

Leveritt's plan was to get Southern Progress Corporation or Mederith Corporation to enter into a fifty/fifty partnership as Time, Inc., Southern Progress' owner, had done with the magazine Hippocrates. The Southern Magazine staff would have been able to retain editorial control. Leveritt said:

> We wanted to get the money to do the things necessary to insure the future success of Southern Magazine. Well, next thing I know is Stephens had gone to Time, Inc. talking about a twenty/eighty partnership. We knew what that meant: losing editorial control of Southern Magazine. Finally the partnership was up to thirty-five/sixty-five but control would still have probably gone to Southern Progress Corporation.[1]

But in the meantime, Southern Progress Corporation made a presentation to Stephens, Inc., detailing a new magazine it was producing that would directly compete with Southern Magazine.[2] Logan said the magazine idea presented to

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[1]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

[2]Don Logan, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 17 November 1989.

Stephens, Inc. was the reformulation of the male audience magazine, Southerner and the scratched Dow Jones, Southern business magazine, South Street.[3] He proposed a different magazine but working Southern Magazine in as "a way to jump start our project with their rate base. Also a partnership might be a way of getting our magazine launched faster."[4]

Stephens, Inc. was concerned about the Southern Magazine staff and felt an obligation to the staff. Logan said Stephens "wanted us to consider future possibilities with them." That did not work out "because of the conceptual differences among the people at Southern Magazine and Southern Progress Corporation."[5] Beth Arnold Graves Morgan, Southern Magazine assistant editor, said that the new owners had no intention of asking any of the staff to move with the magazine.[6]

On March 17, 1989, the sale of Southern Magazine to Time, Inc. was announced. No money passed hands, but an agreement was reached for Southern Progress Corporation to take over

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[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Beth Arnold Graves Morgan, interview by author, Notes, Little Rock, Arkansas, 8 April 1990.

publication. The staff was left out of this decision. In effect, the magazine was pulled out from under them. "Stephens, Inc., as it turned out, wasn't behind us for the the long haul," said Weeks, "It's sad because we turned our first profit at the beginning of the first quarter this year. It was obvious it would take some time, but we all felt like we could make the magazine profitable."[7]

Logan believes that Southern Magazine was available because of two reasons: low renewal rate and lack of sustaining advertising.[8]

Southern Magazine did not immediately cease publication but finished out the third volume with three issues, combining May/June and July/August. The September issue finished the last volume. The first mention of the sale was in Week's May/June "Editor's Note":

> This is my last editor's note and my last issue as editor of Southern Magazine. On March 17, the magazine was purchased by Southern Progress Corporation, publishers of a number of magazine, the best known being Southern Living will be moved to Birmingham, Alabama, home of Southern Progress. I will not be going with the magazine; by the time your read this, a new editor will

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[7]Linton Weeks quoted in John Cargile, "Gone With The Wind," Successful Magazine Publishing, July/August 1989, 22.

[8]John Cargile, "Gone With The Wind," Successful Magazine Publishing, July/August 1989, 22-23.

likely have been named.

On behalf of the staff that has put out Southern Magazine for the last two and a half years, I would like to say it's been a real pleasure. We've gained a lot from our readers, and we hope you might have gained something from us. It's never easy to walk away from an idea that you've nurtured for years, but at times it's necessary.[9]

Morgan was left to complete Volume 3 and bid his farewell in the last "Editor's Note":

In the summer of 1985, I went for a visit to my home state of Mississippi. For two solid weeks I bothered and bullied everyone I knew about a magazine idea I had, a general-interest magazine about the South....

The next winter, I got a call from Linton Weeks, who said that he and a guy named Alan Leveritt had raised capital for an idea they had— a general interest magazine about the South— and would I like to join them? "You bet," and gave up a great job to do it. When the bushy-tailed staff convened that spring and started to compare notes, it turned out that every single one of us had been burning for years to get this chance....

Why is the idea of magazine so magnetic? Some people actually get into this business for the money, but they're the facilitators, not the dreamers. Classic magazines are created by dreamers, and magazine dreams are fueled by ego— usually too much or too little of it.

Working on a magazine is sort of a poor man's professional degree. You'd be amazed at how the average citizen feels inadequate when it comes to writing a letter, much less a story. So if you simply work for a magazine, people are reasonably impressed with you.

But if you own or edit the magazine, then you're of that bloodline that infused Henry Luce (Time, Life), Harold Ross (The New Yorker), and Arnold Gingrich (Esquire). Though most editors would deny it (we're supposed to be high-minded about these things), there's something irresistible about being able to to filter the

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[9]Linton Weeks, "Editor's Note: A Flood of Memories," Southern Magazine, May/June 1989, 6.

culture through your own sensibility– and then repacking it for an admiring audience. Who wouldn't love that? You're the toast of the town, master of the your universe. You move and shake and hob and nob and wheel and deal. You get to hold forth in columns like this, as though you were guest of honor at a party. In fact, your magazine is a movable feast, a party you carry around with you.

Today, rich people don't build pyramids, they own magazines. Real estate mogul Mortimer Zuckerman bought Atlantic Monthly and U.S. News & World Report; wealthy divorcee Frances Lear created a magazine and named it after herself. I'm waiting for a magazine called Trump, The Week in Hubris.

All of which is prelude to this: You hold in your hand the final issue of Southern Magazine. Next month you'll be receiving the successor to this particular magazine dream. Called Southpoint, it'll be the work of a whole new bunch of dreamers.

Right now, nobody can say how the new dreamers' vision will fare, but we know it won't be the last magazine ever launched. Samir Husni, a University of Mississippi journalism professor, says that magazines are being started at a record pace. In 1988, there were 491 magazine start-ups in America, double the 1985 number. The fact that many of those magazines won't have a second issue doesn't seem to deter many people.

No wonder the term used to describe starting a magazine is "launch," as in launching a ship. If we magazine dreamers have a patron saint, surely his name is Ahab. And it comforts us to believe that if his dream hadn't killed him, he'd have gone back to get more bait.[10]

Weeks once again came back with a farewell on the last page of the final issue. From "On Becoming Good Friends" in the first issue to "Goodbye" in the last, Weeks emphasized Southern hospitality.

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[10]James Morgan, "Editor's Note: Magazine Dreams," Southern Magazine, September 1989, 8.

> ...Joyce Davis was trying to say goodbye, but I had one more question. Had she ever noticed that Southerners bid each other farewell in peculiar ways?
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> "Yes I have," said Davis, a Gasden, Alabama woman who writes for her state's poultry federation magazine. "I think it's especially hard for us to say, 'Come back when we harvest the peanuts,' or 'Be sure and come see us when the peaches are ready.' You're never dismissed; there's always an enticement to return."
>
> Why is it so hard for us Southerners to say goodbye? It could be that the reticence hearkens back the bucolic times when folks lived miles apart, saw neighbors rarely, and there was more sorrow than sweetness in each parting. Or maybe it's that, deep down, we don't really like all that many people, so it's hard to say goodbye to those we do like. But I think the real reason is this: There's something inevitable implied in the word goodbye. And Southerners shy away form the inevitable implied in the word goodbye. We're forever fixing to and meaning to and getting ready for the future....[11]

The repositioning was low keyed and not very apparent.

Southern Progress Corporation sent a 8" x 11" insert card to subscribers with the July/August issue. Then with the final issue sent a insert to subscribers saying:

> Dear Subscriber,
> Wise Move.
>
> Back when you first became a Southern Magazine subscriber, you bargained for a fast, fun glance at what's happening of the big Southern scene.
>
> Now you're going to get plenty of that— and plenty more... starting next month with your Premier Issue of Southpoint, The Metropolitan Monthly.

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[11]Linton Weeks, "The Southern Arts: How to say Goodbye," Southern Magazine, September 1989, 80.

> Southpoint proves to you that today's South means business. And people (Oh! What people!). And sports. And politics. And travel. And the arts. And a whole lot more!
>
> Southpoint demands your attention and keeps you informed, alerted and on top of it all, with a probing, candid look at the region's big changes, new players, shifting currents.
>
> As someone who works, lives and plays (to win!) in today's South, you have the greatest need for and about the "thought" leaders who drive our leaders who drive our fast-moving, quick-changing region....
>
> Southpoint will be more lavish, much grander in scope than Southern Magazine.[12]

When Southpoint premiered with an October 1989 issue, there was no mention in the magazine of the past connection with Southern Magazine. Previous Southern Magazine subscribers got another insert, "This is it! Southern Magazine is Southpoint. The bold new magazine that captures the spirit and tenor of the nation's most dynamic region."[13] This is different from the saying of Southern Magazine's "The South. The Whole South, and nothing but the South."[14]

The only real public attention the transfer got was a July 1989 New York Times News Service story, "A Magazine's Bid to Unite the South". John Huey, Southpoint editor, said

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[12]Flyer from Southern Progress Corporation on Southpoint, September 1989.

[13]Flyer from Southern Progress Corporation announcing Southpoint, October 1989.

[14]Southern Magazine, October 1986, 1.

that his magazine is a repositioning of Southern Magazine. There is concern in the article about if "it is possible to make a profit publishing a serious magazine that ties together a diverse region of the country and what kind of place is the South anyway."[15]

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[15]New York Times 3 July 1989, L-29.

CHAPTER VI

CONTENT ANALYSIS

This chapter analyzes the content of Southern Magazine's feature stories for all 34 issues, Volume 1-3. This content is classified according to ten categories: Southern culture and folklore; personality profile; government, politics and law; literature; recreation, fashion and travel; novelty and humor; historical; epicurean; business and industry; and trends and surveys.

Table 1: Categories of Feature Articles

1. Southern culture and folklore
2. Personality profile
3. Government, politics and law
4. Literature
5. Recreation, fashion and travel
6. Novelty and humor
7. Historical
8. Epicurean
9. Business and industry
10. Trends and surveys

Table 1 covers the feature topics of magazine. The features are grouped based on the general content of each article.

Table 2: Total Number of Features by Category

1.	Southern culture and folklore	19
2.	Personality profile	29
3.	Government, politics and law	13
4.	Literature	32
5.	Recreation, fashion and travel	33
6.	Novelty and humor	12
7.	Historical	7
8.	Epicurean	5
9.	Business and industry	31
10.	Trends and surveys	3
	Total	184

Table 3: Categories by Volume

Categories	Vol 1	Vol 2	Vol 3
1. Southern culture and folklore	11	6	3
2. Personality profile	10	11	8
3. Government, politics and law	5	5	3
4. Literature	13	11	8
5. Recreation, fashion and travel	10	12	11
6. Novelty and humor	5	3	4
7. Historical	3	2	2
8. Epicurean	1	2	2
9. Business and industry	8	11	12
10. Trends and surveys	2	1	0

Table 4: Advertising Pages to Total Pages for Southern Magazine, Volumes 1-3

This table shows the number of advertising pages in relation to the total number of pages for each issue. Advertising volume increased from 28.5% in Volume 1, to 34.3% for Volume 2 and increased to 38.6% in Volume 3.

Volume:	Number:	Advertising Pages:	Total Pages:
1	1	41	114
1	2	21	98
1	3	22	100
1	4	21	98
1	5	26	98
1	6	40	106
1	7	28	98
1	8	31	98
1	9	26	98
1	10	23.66	98
1	11	21	82
1	12	37	98
2	1	37	98
2	2	28.33	98
2	3	30	98
2	4	17.66	82
2	5	23.33	82
2	6	51	114
2	7	30	86
2	8	32	82
2	9	39	98
2	10	28	82
2	11	22	82
2	12	37.66	92
3	1	35.66	90
3	2	29	82
3	3	25.66	82
3	4	32	82
3	5	40	90

3	6	60	122
3	7	36.66	82
3	8	36.5	90
3	9	25	82
3	10	21	82

Chapter VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis presented the history of Southern Magazine and what happened during its three year life span. The start-up period of the magazine from conception to publication was nine years. The main delay in launching the magazine was the financial backing. Finally Stephens, Inc. provided a seven million dollar investment to launch Southern Magazine. With the investment in place, Southern Magazine's staff started the difficult task of finding an editorial concept that would be attractive to both advertisers and subscribers.

Being a voice for the South was not an easy task. The magazine spent much of its time discussing the content of the magazine and revising freelanced work.

The advertising community and around 200,000 subscribers were receptive to Southern Magazine's 1986 launch.

The magazine was produced by Southerners for Southerners. Southern Magazine was envisioned to be a speaker for the region. The idea was to cover stories and news in the South with a Southern perspective. The concept of Southern Magazine gave the staff flexibility in determining content.

The execution of the magazine was a different story. Instead of giving a Southern perspective on general interest editorial material, the magazine began by concentrating on the South and being Southern. This led to controversies and, more importantly, cancellations, Southern Magazine emphasized Southern culture and the effects of an antebellum society on today's South, especially in the first volume. As the magazine matured the content was directed more toward today's Southerner with lifestyle, travel and business editorial emphasis.

Criticism of editorial content should have indicated reader dissatisfaction. Without focus groups or guidance from readers the content was hit or miss. Leveritt and Morgan said that focus groups were unnecessary because it was the editor's job to determine editorial content.[1] Focus groups would have been able to more clearly direct the content. Readers will not read material they are not interested in. With a poor percentage of conversions and renewals, obviously readers were not interested in the material or they would have continued subscribing.[2]

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[1]Alan Leveritt, interview by author, Tape recording, Little Rock, Arkansas, 25 September 1989.

[2]Don Logan, interview by author, Tape recording, Oxford, Mississippi, 17 November 1989.

Linton Weeks and Alan Leveritt had the vision for a unique magazine and admirably carried out their concept. But too much energy went into trying to find out the psyche of the South. Instead of concentrating on readers, there seemed to be continually attempts to philosophize everything. In the South, philosophy is best left to the retired men who sit around the county squares. Weeks limited his vision of Southern Magazine to an editorial content too intellectual and too far away from reality to strongly interest readers.

The most popular newsstand issue of Southern Magazine had a cover story on popular singer, Jimmy Buffet. Celebrity covers were rare especially with refusing to cover any celebrity who had left the South.[3] This policy eliminated most television and movie personalities. Even Morgan said, "Most people feel more Southern after leaving the South."[4] The reality is people do not read histories of Memphis, Tennessee, or Greenville, Mississippi. But, Memphians go to Mud Island Amphitheater to see Jimmy Buffet while Greenville helps play host to a blues festival. Southern Magazine saw

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[3]James Morgan, interview with the author, notes, Little Rock, Arkansas, 8 April 1990.

[4]Ibid.

the benefits of mass appeal editorial because as the magazine progressed there were more widely appealing articles.

Subscription figures and circulation were up to expectations. The business side was in order.

There was a problem in trying to establish a strong editorial identity because of the vast subject material of the South. "There is such a huge amount of subject latitude in the South, we could find stories for twenty years and still not have covered everything," said Don Webster.[5]

In establishing a strong regional identity, the staff should not have viewed the whole South as their editorial but only those segments which appealed to their targeted audience. By playing on this segment the editorial content would fit into a well established identity. Southern Magazine was working in this direction, especially after the first volume.

The magazine's difficulties, editorially, were relatively incidental contrasted to successful advertising efforts. Southern Magazine's advertising increased steadily during its publishing history. Advertising pages rose from an average of twenty-eight pages per issue in Volume 1 to thirty-four

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[5]Don Webster, interview with the author, Tape recording, Knoxville, Tennessee, 22 August 1989.

pages per issue in Volume 3. This increase is in lieu of the fact that advertising solicitation was minimal after Southern Progress Corporation bought the magazine. Once Southern Progress Corporation took over the magazine with Volume 3, Number 7 (April 1989), the advertising pages began to decline. This was because Southern Magazine was being killed after the September 1989 issue.

Southern Magazine requested more money from Stephens, Inc. in Fall 1988. Instead of funding more money, Stephens, Inc. agreed to let Southern Progress Corporation take over the magazine. When Southern Progress Corporation took Southern Magazine over, it relaunched the magazine and replaced it with Southpoint.

Solid advertising seemed to be Southern Magazine's strong point. Yet, Logan cited a lack of advertisers that were natural as a major problem with Southern Magazine. The number of ad pages and their consistency was evident. Advertising seemed to be on an upward trend. The percentage of ad pages went from 28 percent in Volume 1, 34 percent in Volume 2, to 41 percent in Volume 3, Numbers 1-7. This increase should have been an indicator of the magazine's viability. Obviously, advertisers approved of Southern Magazine or else advertisers would have declined. Southern Magazine's advertising were more successful than its

repositioned new Southern Progress Corporation title, Southpoint, which failed to attract advertisers in its first issue. Twenty-six percent of Southpoint's premiere issue was advertisements. With the backing of Time, Inc., it is incomprehensible that Southern Progress Corporation had such a low percentage of advertisements for Southpoint's premiere issue. Southern Magazine was able to attract advertisers and was doing a successful job at advertisement sales.

Throughout its publishing history, Southern Magazine was able to increase its advertising pages and maintain circulation . But circulation efforts for the magazine did not fare as well as the advertising. The first direct mailing to six million households netted around 200,000 subscribers. After the initial direct mail campaign, circulation grew slowly. Low conversion and renewal rates resulted in having to replace former subscribers with new subscribers and then building from there. Also, the fulfillment company was unable to manage the large direct mail and subscription.

The impressive direct mail launch was followed by a year of direct mail disasters. By 1988, direct mail was working again for Southern Magazine. With subscription offers working, Southern Magazine then concentrated on increased newsstand sales. Newsstand increases would have been a lot

cheaper to generate. The researchers and the magazine's staff could have tested different covers and looked into newsstand promotions and point-of-purchase displays. By the third volume the magazine showed more editorial stability which would have eventually been reflected in higher conversions and renewals.

Southern Magazine blamed editorial and circulation problems on free-lance writing. Supposedly, poor free-lance writing made it difficult to have consistently good editorial material. Not the topic of the story, but the actual writing of the story, led to problems for the magazine. One major reason for wanting an additional investment in December 1988 was to hire more staff members and lessen the reliance on free-lancers. It is hard to accept that all problems can be blamed on free-lancers. Logan said the topic of the story was more important than the writing while Husni said the editors responsibility was to fix/edit material submitted.

The concept of a general interest regional magazine is difficult to work with. There are very few successful regional magazines. The major reason is that people tend to identify more with their city and/or state than region. Also, the climate of regional magazine publishing in general is not conducive to the type of magazine that was Southern Magazine. Regional magazines are becoming more specialized

and the only high circulation in regional magazines is in shelter titles.

The only highly successful Southern regional titles are the shelter publications, Southern Living and Southern Accents. Both titles are owned by Southern Progress Corporation. With time, money, and vision a regional magazine can still succeed but must, above all, target readers and remain consistent in producing a product for them. But Southern Magazine, in spite of its problems, seemed destined to be a successful regional magazine.

The magazine was on a natural course of growth. In its short publishing period of two-and-a-half years, the magazine began to mature. The staff was able to get most of its philosophical Southern culture articles published during the first volume. This catharsis allowed content to become more realistic and more fitting. Instead of trying to continue in the same vein, the magazine grew as it went along. In the long run there was a trend toward a business/commercial magazine with lifestyle features. The magazine was working. The staff understood its audience better, and was beginning to better target their audience.

The magazine, with its personality and quirks, was visibly successful among industry leaders. The American Society of Journalists and Authors presented Southern

Magazine Outstanding New Magazine of 1987 and The 1988 Magazine of the Year. The Gallagher Report selected Southern Magazine as a 1988 Magazine of the Month. Folio presented Circulation/Direct Marketing Silver Awards to staff members. From 1987-1989, the City and Regional Magazine Association also presented awards for commentary, overall design, general interest feature and a color spread to the magazine.

Management philosophy did not create problems because the magazine was able to function with Linton Weeks controlling the final editorial product, as an editor should. "Linton Weeks knows more about the South than anyone, but needed more human, contemporary contact," said Morgan.[6] The problem was the philosophy of the management. Weeks, an intellectual historian was far removed from the mainstream of everyday Southern society.

Southern Magazine's staff spent excessive time debating the issues of Southern identity. This was a waste of time and energy. There was no real reason to worry about the concept of the South. No real definition of the South allowed opportunity to be flexible, but made it difficult to be consistent. Time could have been better spent figuring

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[6]James Morgan, interview with the author, notes, Little Rock, Arkansas, 8 April 1990.

inexpensive ways to increase circulation and improve editorial content.

The magazine did not have continuous media coverage. Southern Magazine had a good launch publicly but weak press coverage after that. They needed to increased public relations and promotional activity. The staff should have figured out ways to keep visible in the media. While looking through the remnants of Southern Magazine's files in Little Rock, Arkansas, the researcher found out there were no press releases or any media promotions. After doing such good work on advertising promotions, Southern Magazine should have turned its attention to media promotion. Southern Living Cooking School is a good example of great promotional activity for media and subscribers. Southern Magazine could have sponsored a quest for the best contest, something to recognize excellence in areas of interest to Southern Magazine, including education, business, economic development, travel, festivals and politicians. This could have been similar to a best and worst ranking, except for more involvement from the participants.

To generate income and promote the magazine, ancillary products would have been good sources of additional income. Examples of ancillary products include Southern Magazine calendar, bar manual, travel guide, cookbook and literature

collection. The fact that Southern Magazine's short story contest had more than 7,000 entries showed a strong interest in the literary aspects of the magazine. A short story annual collection would have been a great way to help promote the magazine and help provide income. The stories were readily available for marginal costs. Production of a short story collection would have helped familiarize the literary world with Southern Magazine. There was a project with August House, a regional book publisher in Little Rock, to produce a Southern Magazine short story collection. This venture fell through when the magazine was sold.[7] Leveritt also believed that the magazine was too young to worry about ancillary products. The most important thing was getting out the magazine.[8]

Southern Magazine had prospects of a healthy future based on increased advertisement revenues and even stagnant circulation. The circulation problems Southern Magazine was having probably could have been corrected with another good direct mail campaign. The planned direct mailing for

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[7]Alan Leveritt, interview with author, Notes, Little Rock, Arkansas, 9 April 1990.

[8]Ibid.

December 1989 probably would have been successful in saving the magazine's rate base.

Southern Magazine was caught between Stephens, Inc. and Southern Progress Corporation. The magazine was unable to deal with investors with any leverage or authority. Stephens, Inc. did not know enough about magazine publishing and was correct in asking Leveritt to go find "publishing partners." With guidance and help of a publishing company such as Meredith or Southern Progress Corporation, Southern Magazine would still be published. Stephens, Inc. panicked at the wrong time.

One problem was Arkansas Writers Project did not have a clear contract agreement with Stephens, Inc. With this fuzziness, Stephens, Inc. was able to transfer Southern Magazine to Southern Progress Corporation without any input from Arkansas Writers Project.

Southern Magazine was moving toward more positive editorial directions. The editorial emphasis was heading to more business and leisure articles and away from the culture of the South. Being young and dynamic is great for a magazine but how can they argue with the experience and success of Southern Progress Corporation. Southern Progress Corporation did not know how to deal with Southern Magazine

because of the 1984 meeting between the two groups and focus of Volume 1 of Southern Magazine.

For three brief years, Southern Magazine was able to capture the South in a way no other magazine could do. Even its own editorial evolution from a Southern perspective to an upscale viewpoint personified the late twentieth century transition for a rural society to a cosmopolitan culture.